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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MANAGUA 000914

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [SOCI](#) [NU](#)  
SUBJECT: NICARAUGA: PRISON PROTEST & POLICE ABUSE

Classified By: Ambassador Robert J. Callahan for reasons 1.4 (b & d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: New cases of degrading and discriminatory treatment in Nicaragua's prisons are back in the news. On September 8, a complaint was filed against an Atlantic Coast police chief for violating a juvenile prisoner's human rights by forbidding him to defecate. On September 9, five female spouses of inmates in the Modelo penitentiary in Tipitapa filed complaints against prison officials for "degrading and unsanitary treatment" during body cavity searches. These are only the latest examples of police abuse, discrimination and prison mismanagement that highlight the miserable conditions that most of Nicaragua's prisoners face. END SUMMARY

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Police Chief Forbids BM - Discrimination or Abuse?  
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¶2. (U) On September 8, an attorney representing a juvenile of Afro-Caribbean descent filed a complaint against Pearl Lagoon Nicaraguan National Police (NNP) Chief Carlos Machado for violating human rights. Machado, who is mestizo and from the Pacific side of Nicaragua, allegedly forbade a juvenile offender from defecating in the South Atlantic Autonomous Region (RAAS) Pearl Lagoon Municipality holding cell. According to the attorney, Machado threatened the juvenile that if he defecated, "he would regret it." When the juvenile could no longer hold his bowel movement, he defecated into a plastic bag and threw it out the holding cell window; whereupon Machado forced the juvenile to pick up the plastic bag of excrement with his teeth.

¶3. (U) Afro-Caribbean leaders within the Pearl Lagoon community were outraged and described Machado's actions as "racist." Pearl Lagoon Territorial Government Secretary Cristobal Garth told reporters that this was only the latest case of discrimination and police abuse in the region. There was another unresolved case in which police used excessive force against another Afro-Caribbean juvenile. Community leaders have called on the NNP to conduct investigations for both cases. RAAS police Commissioner Ovidio Hernandez Salguera told reporters that the NNP was aware of the cases and has already ordered the Internal Affairs and Inspectorate to investigate them.

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Prison Protest Over One Glove & No Food

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14. (U) On September 9, five female spouses of prisoners in the Modelo prison at Tipitapa filed complaints with the Human Rights Defense Commission (PDDH) against the National Penitentiary System (SPN). The complaints alleged that they were subjected to humiliating and unsanitary treatment when their body cavities were searched by prison officials before having conjugal meetings with their imprisoned husbands. Moreover, the prison officials conducting the body cavity search used the same surgical glove for all five women. In the complaint, the women asserted this practice had unnecessarily exposed them to communicable disease. The complaints came at the same time that Modelo inmates had been protesting the prison's poor living conditions and the lack of adequate food and medicine. Approximately 2,000 inmates are housed in the Modelo facility, well in excess of its capacity.

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COMMENT  
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15. (C) Prison conditions are harsh at best for the thousands of inmates crowded into Nicaragua's penitentiary system. Prison food is poor, medicine is scarce, and many prisoners live in squalid conditions in a system that has had little or no investment for years. Moreover, the police and prison officials who work in the penal system are chronically underpaid and prone to abuse detainees and their family

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members, in part to exhort bribes or favors. While these two cases are dramatic, they are not isolated, but rather emblematic of the wider problems of Nicaragua's prison system.  
CALLAHAN